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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)  
SUBJECT: SPI 17: U.S.-ROK 17TH SECURITY POLICY INITIATIVE  
TALKS PART 1 OF 2

Classified By: A/POL Brian D. McFeeters, Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (S) The 17th Security Policy Initiative (SPI) talks were held in Seoul on April 8, 2008. The U.S. Delegation was headed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for East Asia David Sedney, with Ministry of National Defense (MND) Deputy Minister of Defense for Policy Jeon Jei-guk leading the ROK Delegation. Both sides highlighted SPI-17, the first SPI under the new Lee Myung-bak (LMB) Administration, as an opportunity to begin crafting a forward-looking, more strategic-oriented Alliance, while resolving remaining Alliance issues. The talks were characterized by mutual support for reinvigorating and broadening the Alliance with an emphasis on initiating positive momentum on defense issues ahead of the upcoming Presidential Summit. Both sides agreed that the next Presidential Summit joint statement should include a vision for the Alliance. There was general satisfaction with progress made on the majority of SPI topics covered, including preparation for the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON), ROK Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) plans, past ROK contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan, Armistice Maintenance Responsibility (AMR) transition, Yongsan Relocation Plan and the Land Partnership Plan (YRP/LPP), ROK Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Status upgrade, 8th Army Transformation plans, and the need for further cooperation in space policy. Despite hopes that the improved general atmosphere surrounding the Alliance would lead to a quick and smooth return of nine USFK facilities this year, thus avoiding a replay of the acrimony in the press and damage to the Alliance that occurred during 2007's returns, discussions revealed that there remains a fundamental difference in perception of U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK)'s compliance with the relevant environmental standards. Both sides agreed to convene a Special Joint Committee Session of the U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with two-star general officer level representation to further discuss the issue.

2. (SBU) SPI-18 is tentatively scheduled for June in Washington, DC.

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CLOSED SESSION

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13. (S) In the 75-minute Closed Session that preceded the plenary, DASD Sedney apologized for the difficulty they had encountered in scheduling Minister of National Defense Lee Sang-hee's May visit to Washington to meet with Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Gates. He explained the competing demands on the SECDEF's schedule made scheduling a meeting difficult.

DASD Sedney emphasized that the SECDEF looked forward to meeting with Minister Lee during his planned travel to Seoul for the USFK change of command ceremony in June 2008. Jeon replied that Minister Lee also looked forward to their meeting in June, adding that due to heightened tensions in relations between North and South Korea, he would be unable to travel outside of the country anytime soon.

14. (S) DASD Sedney expressed serious U.S. concerns over the sudden ROKG decision to suspend actions to obtain the Global Hawk intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capability for the ROK military. He reminded Jeon that at SPI-16 in Washington, Jeon had made a strong presentation on the issue and had asked that he and East Asia Pacific (EAP) Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Alex Arvizu do all they could to secure USG approval to sell the Global Hawk system to the ROK. DASD Sedney further explained that he and DAS Arvizu had made this an urgent issue within both the Defense and State Departments and now as a result of the new ROK position that our ability to respond quickly in the future would be greatly affected. Jeon thanked the U.S. Government for its efforts, and assured DASD Sedney that the ROK decision to reconsider acquiring Global Hawk was unrelated to its commitment to assume wartime OPCON in April 2012. Jeon explained that budgetary and military planning reasons necessitated a ROKG internal review before the decision to proceed with the purchase was made. "We are not canceling the plan, we are reviewing it," Jeon said. DASD Sedney replied that even if the ROK was not ready to make the decision today, it would be better if it briefed the U.S. delegation at SPI on its Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) requirements and concept of operations (CONOPS) for the use of Global Hawk to demonstrate its continuing interest in acquiring the system at an appropriate time. (Note: After the meeting Jeon ordered his staff to deliver the ISR requirements and CONOPS brief at SPI later that afternoon.)

15. (S) Turning to the issue of whether or not to halt the reduction of USFK troops in Korea at 28,500, Jeon expressed his view that it was a good idea to halt the drawdown. He said that if it were raised during President Lee Myung-bak's April visit to Washington, it could be agreed to in principle, with the details to be worked out by the time of the U.S.-ROK defense ministerial in June. DASD Sedney welcomed the news, stressing that the U.S. side had been very disappointed to read the public quote by an MND source stating that the U.S. had proposed to halt the drawdown because it wanted a bargaining chip to use during this year's Special Measures Agreement (SMA) negotiations. Jeon requested more details regarding the capabilities that would remain in place if the troop level were kept at 28,500. He added that it was not important which country had asked for it if the CFC recommended it as the prudent military thing to do.

16. (S) Most of the meeting was then spent discussing the issue of using the ROK's contribution of burdensharing funds through the SMA to pay for the movement of the 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) to the new facilities now being constructed at the expanded Camp Humphreys site in Pyeongtaek under the LPP. Jeon said he had been taken aback by General Bell's statement before the Congress that the ROKG would pay for 50 percent of the 2ID move. Brigadier General (BG) Kim Byung-ki, Deputy Director General of the MND International Policy Bureau, came to our defense by explaining that it had been clearly understood by both sides that SMA funds could be used for LPP when that agreement was concluded in 2004, in fact, that it was understood dating back to the initial discussions of LPP in 2001. However, he joined the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) and MND chorus calling for USFK to provide figures on the exact mix of U.S. funding and SMA money that would be used to fund the 2ID move, arguing that they needed hard numbers with which to make a convincing case to the National Assembly. "We bureaucrats cannot do policy without having the facts," MND International Policy Bureau Director General (DG) Song Bong-heon added.

17. (S) Jeon also used the occasion to argue that a more accurate calculation of the ROK's contribution to USFK's non-personnel stationing costs (NPSC) was needed. He took issue with the USFK Commander-designate's testimony the previous week that the ROK SMA contribution covered only 41 percent of that total cost. In his response, DASD Sedney firmly reiterated the U.S. position that SMA can and would be used for LPP in accordance with the 2004 agreement. He also made clear that the process was transparent and information had been provided on the use of SMA funds. DASD Sedney emphasized that what is quite clear is that SMA funds are used responsibly for things that the SMA allowed: labor, logistics, and construction. Embassy PolOff added that the addition of more level of detail to the information already provided is not the solution to the current problem and highlighted that whether the funds are used at current facilities to support 2ID soldiers or for construction of new facilities to support 2ID soldiers should not matter. The point is that SMA funds are being used for the intended purpose, he said. DASD Sedney stated that even if the ROK increased its contribution to cover 50 percent of the NPSC, it would only cover 18 percent of the total cost borne by the U.S. to station forces in defense of the Republic of Korea. "So don't get too excited arguing about small parts of small amounts," he concluded.

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OPEN SESSION: ROK PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (PKO) PLANS  
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18. (S) Following the opening remarks and ROK explanation of ongoing and future operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Jeon discussed the ROKG commitment of PKO missions around the world. Jeon remarked that there were currently 1078 ROK troops deployed in 14 countries, including Iraq, Lebanon, and Kuwait, as part of ongoing PKO missions. "The new ROK administration designated strengthening the ROK's PKO capabilities and streamlining their deployment process as a key priority," Jeon said. At present, the ROK constitution requires the National Assembly to approve every deployment, sometimes delaying appropriate action. Jeon explained the ROKG plan was to create and provide appropriate training for a standing PKO force of 1000 troops with all relevant specialties that could be quickly deployed. New PKO legislation defining the scope of application and a streamlined approval process would be needed, Jeon explained.

Currently there were three versions of PKO legislation under consideration by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. Jeon said that MND would push for introduction of the bill in the next National Assembly session this summer. The ROKG also plans to establish a national PKO training center under the control of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in order to expand its PKO-related external military training cooperation.

19. (S) DASD Sedney thanked the ROK side for the update. Embassy PolOff David Wolff expressed U.S. appreciation for Korea's PKO efforts around the world, citing the ROKG decision to send 38 Korean troops to participate in this year's Global Peace Operations Initiative Capstone Exercise in Bangladesh. DASD Sedney noted that the U.S. had proposed a few years ago that the ROKG contribute to the U.S.-established PKO training center in Mongolia. DASD Sedney suggested that the ROKG take into consideration the operations of this center to identify synergies for further cooperation and avoid duplication of effort as the ROKG plan for an upgraded PKO training center develops.

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SECURITY COOPERATION IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN  
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¶10. (S) Jeon commented that the ROK planned to withdraw its military troops from Iraq by December of this year. He said he thought that the withdrawal would occur as planned. However, he noted that the plan could be reviewed. Regarding the ROK role in Afghanistan, DASD Sedney stated that the ROK could contribute further in the following areas: training Afghan security forces, including the Afghan National Police, at locations such as the Afghan National Police Training Center; expanding vocational training opportunities in Afghanistan, especially in places like Kabul; and providing grant-aid defense articles or assistance credits to equip Afghan security forces. DASD Sedney suggested that the ROKG dispatch a survey team to Kabul to see firsthand the requirements.

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MILITARY-TO-MILITARY RELATIONS WITH CHINA  
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¶11. (S) DASD Sedney briefed the status of U.S. military-to-military relations with China during the Bush Administration. He highlighted the U.S. objective of broadening engagement with China in order to bring it further into the international system as a responsible stakeholder. From a low point with the 2001 EP3 incident, U.S. mil-to-mil relations with China have grown to include a number of high-level visits, including a recent visit by Secretary Gates. There are regularly-scheduled defense policy coordination talks twice a year. DASD Sedney said that the U.S. emphasizes its "One China Policy" in these meetings, noting that the U.S. "One China Policy" differs from the Chinese "One China Policy." At the meetings, China raised concern about Taiwan and specifically U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Overall, however, DASD Sedney surmised that cross straits relations had stabilized in recent years as cultural and economic ties between Taiwan and China had deepened. DASD Sedney concluded with four success stories from China mil-to-mil engagement: 1) The U.S. and China reached an

agreement, after seventeen years of negotiation, to access China's records from the Korean War which would prove valuable in the U.S. effort to locate missing personnel from that war; 2) An agreement was reached to discuss nuclear strategy and policy; 3) China provided the U.S. its white papers on China's military power; and 4) The military hotline between DOD and the People's Liberation Army is now operational. The U.S. engagement continues, but China asked to slow down exchanges because of the 2008 Summer Olympics.

¶12. (S) Jeon said that the ROKG was very interested in China's development, particularly, its military development. Given China's direct influence on regional security and its ability to influence North Korea, Jeon highlighted two primary concerns vis-a-vis China: the transparency of its military budget and China's ultimate objective in its military force enhancements. DASD Sedney agreed that the PRC had had an aggressive and successful military modernization program, highlighting the Chinese focus on anti-satellite, cyberwarfare, and nuclear programs. Jeon said that since the ROK established diplomatic relations with China in 1992, MND's China engagement strategy was to encourage China to play a more constructive role toward peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, including using its influence with North Korea to resolve the nuclear issue. Like the U.S., the ROK focused its efforts on increasing bilateral exchanges. The ROK held annual defense ministerial talks for the past three years. The ROK also conducted a combined search and rescue exercise and agreed to establish navy and air force hotlines, said Northeast Asia Policy Division Director Colonel (COL) Lee Nam-woo. The ROK and PRC militaries also conducted a total of seven intel exchange meetings.

¶13. (S) DASD Sedney thanked MND for their briefing and asked if the hotline was established because of a specific problem or potential for dangerous incidents in the future. Jeon

responded that the hotline was established as a way to mitigate misunderstandings, especially given the close proximity in which the air and naval forces of the two countries operate within the region. He further elaborated that while the ROK Navy proposed an annual joint search and rescue exercise (SAREX) with China, China declined and the last formal exercise was conducted two years ago. The current plan is hold joint SAREX training in conjunction with port call visits. DASD Sedney asked if China shared any information about their relationship with North Korea during the ROKG exchanges with China. BG Kim Byung-ki responded that no specific details were discussed concerning their relationship with North Korea.

¶14. (S) DASD Sedney asked MND to share their experience with China regarding strategic intentions. Jeon responded that the relationship is in elementary stages and difficult to discuss as China is reluctant to discuss many details. MOFAT's North American Affairs Bureau Deputy DG Chang Ho-jin asked if there were differences between the U.S. mil-to-mil relationships with China and with Japan. DASD Sedney explained that there were many differences, noting that as a treaty ally, Japan and the U.S. shared a very close, broad, and deep relationship.

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NORTH KOREA MISSILE THREAT  
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¶15. (S) The ROK side presented a frank assessment of the North Korean missile threat. Jeon called for greater U.S.-ROK intelligence sharing, noting that the missile threat would continue to grow because North Korea saw its missile development program as a means of ensuring regime survival and acquiring foreign currency. COL Nam Dong-wo presented an overview of the ROK's assessment of the North Korean missile threat focusing on the KN02, SCUD, No Dong, IRBM, and Taepo Dong 2 missiles (copies of ROK briefing slides have been transmitted through DIA channels). He noted that North Korean ballistic missiles are increasingly becoming a threat to its neighbors in the region.

¶16. (S) DASD Sedney noted that the U.S. and ROK assessments tracked closely. He stressed that North Korea's growing capabilities and continued development of its missile program, combined with its demonstrated WMD and nuclear capability, enabled it to hold its neighbors and the region hostage. As a basis for further cooperation and information sharing, DASD Sedney requested a JCS brief on its requirements at the next SPI and suggested a U.S.-ROK missile joint analysis in order to identify problems and areas for cooperation. He noted that the U.S. Missile Defense Agency would be willing to brief its concept for conducting a joint analysis process at the next SPI.

¶17. (S) USFK J-5's Major General (MajGen) Frank Panter echoed DASD Sedney's remarks, thanked MND for the briefing and added that the ROK and U.S. missile threat assessments were very close; this threat had been very important to USFK as highlighted by USFK Commander-designate Lieutenant General Sharp's Congressional confirmation testimony the previous week. Jeon agreed that a joint threat assessment would be beneficial, and noted that deeper exploration of the topic should be made at the next SPI.

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U.S.-ROK-JAPAN TRILATERAL SECURITY COOPERATION  
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¶18. (S) Recalling Secretary Gates's call at the 39th Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) for increased trilateral cooperation to promote regional security, DASD Sedney said the U.S. would enthusiastically welcome resumed trilateral security cooperation with Japan and South Korea. He added that his colleagues at the Japanese Ministry of Defense were similarly enthusiastic. DASD Sedney noted that the PACOM J-5 already engaged in a trilateral process with the ROK and Japan through the annual Trilateral J-5 Strategy Talks, as



well as a trilateral search and rescue exercise planned following the RIMPEC Exercise in Hawaii this summer. He noted that the U.S. side was looking to further operational-level cooperation, but stressed it was also important to resume strategic policy discussions among the three defense departments. DASD Sedney said the U.S. would be willing to host, as would Japan probably, although he understood the ROK was the next in line to host discussions under the previous process. DASD Sedney stressed that the proposed discussion would be based upon shared interests as both the ROK and Japan are U.S. treaty allies with common values. The process was not intended to counter other nations, nor meant to be exclusive.

¶19. (S) Jeon agreed that security threats had evolved, becoming even more complex and transnational, thereby increasing the need for greater trilateral cooperation. He did, however, express continued concern that too much visibility might lead to greater Chinese and Russian cooperation to counter a perceived threat. Jeon asked that the U.S. work to confirm Japanese interest, which DASD Sedney promised to do the following day when he visited Tokyo. DASD Sedney emphasized the importance of the ROKG contacting Japan as well. Jeon said he would try and stressed that minister-level approval would be needed on the ROK-side before topics or specifics were discussed, but looked forward to further initial coordination at the working-level. He asked DOD to take the lead on this matter. DASD Sedney emphasized that Secretary Gates fully supported resuming trilateral security cooperation and noted that OSD's John Hill would visit Seoul in late May to coordinate working-level discussions in preparation for higher-level meetings.

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FOREIGN MILITARY SALES (FMS) STATUS UPGRADE  
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¶20. (S) Joint U.S. Military Affairs Group-Korea (JUSMAG-K) Chief COL Kevin Madden stressed that the U.S. side had secured strong, high-level support within the Departments of State and Defense for ROK FMS Status Upgrade. COL Madden explained that General Bell had made a strong case for the upgrade in his March 12 Congressional testimony. He noted that, to date, the legislation had received 25 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and four in the Senate. Noting that Congress viewed specific issues such as the FMS Status Upgrade from the perspective of overall U.S.-ROK relations, COL Madden urged the ROKG to cooperate closely on a range of Alliance issues, as well as to continue actively engaging U.S. legislators.

¶21. (S) DASD Sedney pointed out that there had been positive movement in the U.S. Congress. He echoed statements of strong support within DOD for legislation to upgrade the ROK's FMS Status, noting that Secretary Gates fully supported the upgrade as an important symbol of strengthening the Alliance and as a way to improve U.S.-ROK interoperability. As part of continued cooperation to improve interoperability, DASD Sedney encouraged the ROK to share with the U.S. their analysis of interoperability requirements as we move toward OPCON transition and beyond at the next SPI.

¶22. (S) Jeon remarked that the FMS upgrade would have many implications for the Alliance and offered his assurances that the ROK would do everything possible to gain U.S. Congressional support. Jeon conveyed appreciation for the Secretary's and SECDEF's support, which he believed would

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help achieve a successful result. EAP/Korea's Jim Heller noted that the Secretary would send letters to key Congressional leaders in the coming days supporting the upgrade.

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INTERNATIONAL SPACE COOPERATION STRATEGY  
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123. (S) In response to the ROK request for greater international space cooperation at SPI-16, DASD Sedney noted that there were a number of space courses available for ROK participation. DASD Sedney urged MND to review course topics and work with JUSMAG-K to obtain additional information and arrange ROK enrollment through the FMS process. He noted that the National Security Space Institute was in the process of reviewing its curriculum to devise a course for international students that may be available for ROK involvement at some future point. DASD Sedney stated that the foundation of a new defense space cooperation relationship was the clear understanding of the requirements, desires, knowledge level, plans, and capabilities of a potential space partner. DASD Sedney offered to facilitate discussions between the ROK and the DOD Office of Space Policy and provided a list of DOD questions for the ROK side to consider in preparation. He noted that before DOD could begin consideration of a service-to-service-level MOU regarding space cooperation, DOD would need to first understand ROK requirements and objectives. Jeon thanked DASD Sedney for the quick response to the ROK's request and asked for continued interest by the U.S. in further international space cooperation.

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WARTIME OPCON TRANSITION  
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124. (S) Jeon assured the U.S. side that the Lee Myung-bak Administration was committed to the smooth implementation of wartime OPCON and had designated it as one of the new government's core tasks. JCS Chief of the OPCON Transition Unit COL Choi Young-bum outlined the progress made in implementation of the OPCON Strategic Transition Plan (STP). Of the 19 STP tasks identified, Choi quoted a completion rate between 25 to 35 percent, noting that the implementation process was on schedule. Specifically, he reported that discussions were ongoing to draft the Integrated Planning System Memorandum of Agreement, a joint roadmap specifying Alliance Maintenance Coordination Cell roles and functions, as well as standard operating procedures for the Joint Operations Coordination Center and Warning and Intelligence Operations Center. MajGen Panter concurred with the ROK briefing that the process was on track to achieve transition by April 2012 as scheduled.

125. (S) MajGen Panter expressed hope that both sides would discuss and reconfirm their commitment to OPCON transition at the upcoming Presidential Summit. He stressed that appropriate budget and resource allocation as well as fully utilizing the limited number of exercises for training purposes remained of key importance as STP implementation continued. MajGen Panter said that while the U.S. would provide needed bridging capabilities after OPCON transition, this would only be a temporary solution until the ROK military obtained their own capabilities. The ROK must budget and allocate resources as appropriate to meet these requirements, he added. MajGen Panter said that the transition of wartime OPCON was not dependent on acquisition of additional systems, and that U.S. military leaders assessed the ROK is capable of assuming OPCON today. He clarified that those additional capabilities identified in the STP would only enhance already sufficient warfighting capabilities. He went on to add that the Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) was key and represented an important step toward achieving effective training capabilities. Jeon stated that MND was fully aware of the issues, but admitted there were some unresolved problems with personnel and the structure of the JFHQ.

126. (S) Jeon offered a positive assessment of the Key Resolve/Foal Eagle (KR/FE) 08 combined U.S.-ROK exercise in preparation for wartime OPCON transition. This year's KR/FE exercise was observed by ROK JCS and included 44 training events to achieve jointness, integration, and synchronization. Through KR/FE participation, ROK JCS identified the need for a ROK-led joint exercise system and

verified the feasibility of a Korea Joint Command and Control System (KJCCS) oriented interface system. Looking ahead, ROK JCS plans to move from a combined to ROK-led over a series of two theater-level command post exercises annually. The upcoming Ulchi Focus Guardian (UFG) 08 exercise will test the capabilities of separate ROK and U.S. warfighting headquarters.

¶27. (S) DASD Sedney remarked that the ROK JCS appeared to have benefited from participation in KR/FE, noting how important it was to have the right people in the right job participate in the right training in order to gain needed skills. He urged ROK JCS to take full advantage of the remaining four UFG exercise events before assuming wartime OPCON in 2012 in order to benefit from lessons learned along the way. MajGen Panter stressed that the U.S. remained committed to KR/FE and UFG to ensure preparedness for a joint defense of the Korean Peninsula. While training through exercises is critical, he also urged continued emphasis on developing separate national operational plans and stressed the need to pay close attention to interoperability, particularly as the ROK acquired C4I capabilities. He cautioned that C2 would "fall apart" if interoperability was not sufficiently addressed.

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ARMISTICE MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES  
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¶28. (S) MND Director of International Peace Cooperation Division COL Park Hee-chol explained that the United Nations Command (UNC) Armistice Maintenance Responsibility (AMR) Senior Working Group (SWG) had achieved broad understanding on four categories, namely 1) General/oversight; 2) Jurisdiction and Administration of Military Demarcation Line (MDL)/Demilitarized Zone (DMZ); 3) Specific Means to Maintain the Armistice/Control Forces in order to Maintain the Armistice; and 4) Operate and Support the Military Armistice Commission (MAC)/Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC). Each category would include the relevant specific responsibilities identified in the Armistice Agreement. Park said that the SWG would further discuss the specific language in the title for categories 1 and 3, as well as the placement of some specific responsibilities. However, Park reported that the SWG was on track to complete phase one tasks, including the identification of specific and implied responsibilities along with a review of requisite authorities associated with each responsibility, and would report the results to the 40th SCM later this year. Jeon and MajGen Panter both praised the progress made by the SWG and agreed that the remaining differences were minor and would be resolved promptly through further discussion. MajGen Panter stressed that UNC AMR and OPCON transition issues were not connected, clarifying recent ROK press reports that tied the two together. MajGen Panter noted that the mismatch of authority and UNC AMR has long been a problem that will only worsen after wartime OPCON transition.

VERSHBOW